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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001734

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

AF/S FOR BNEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE, D. TEITELBAUM
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
AID FOR DCHA/OFDA GOTTLIEB, KHANDANGLE
AFR/SA FOR FLEURET, COPSON, LOKEN

E. O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV EAD ZI

SUBJECT: Squeeze on Humanitarian Efforts Increasing

REF: A. HARARE 1594

B. HARARE 1563

C. HARARE 1416 AND PREVIOUS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: GOZ obstruction of international organizations, especially in the area of assistance to internally displaced persons, continues. The GOZ has requested that the UN close its Relief and Recovery Unit and is blocking access to newly displaced farmers resettled on former commercial farms as well as ex-commercial farm workers. The government media has stepped up its portrayal of international organizations and their employees as interfering with sovereignty and promoting regime change.
END SUMMARY

2. (SBU) United Nations Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator Victor Angelo told the diplomatic community in late September that the UN had closed its Relief and Recovery Unit (RRU) on September 2, at the GOZ's insistence. The RRU had met with significant resistance from the GOZ, and its operations had been progressively constrained in the months preceding the GOZ's request, with RRU staff often prohibited from traveling outside Harare. The RRU, funded through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), focused on coordination of humanitarian activities in Zimbabwe, including information collection and sharing, monitoring of internally displaced persons, and liaison with the GOZ. Donors have met several times since then to discuss how to address the need for coordination. Two USG-supported OCHA staff remain at the UN offices, but there is no official OCHA office in Zimbabwe.

3. (SBU) As reported (ref A), in a series of "second generation" evictions, police and local government in the Banket region evicted A1 farmers, former communal area subsistence farmers who settled on commercial farms under the GOZ's fast-track land reform program. Over the past week, a new series of evictions of A1 farmers began at four former commercial farms in Mashonaland West, and local government officials gave out notices of eviction to A1 farmers on another farm in Mashonaland East. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been involved in assessing the status of the displaced persons in the Banket region. The GOZ reportedly told IOM and ICRC not to assist the newly displaced farmers in Mashonaland West and East, because it would be seen as encouraging farmers to stay on or near farms instead of returning to their home villages. IOM was to meet with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Social Welfare to discuss the increasing number of displaced persons and the status of an IDP task force the GOZ promised to set up. Meanwhile, thousands of ex-commercial farm workers remain displaced and homeless, and access to many of them even by IOM or ICRC is not possible.

4. (SBU) On October 3, the government-controlled Sunday Mail newspaper reported that UN Resident Representative Angelo had been recalled because of reports that he was "meddling in the country's internal politics." The article further accused Angelo of working with the MDC to effect regime change in Zimbabwe, a charge that continues to be leveled daily in the press against non-governmental organizations. The UN ran several statements in the press denouncing the article and explaining that Angelo is departing at the scheduled end of his term in Zimbabwe. The Sunday Mail article also quoted Minister of Foreign Affairs Stan Mudenge as saying that negative reporting on Zimbabwe by UN elements "could lead to the collapse of the UN system in Zimbabwe."

5. (SBU) Over the past several months, at least one international NGO, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), has had difficulty getting extensions of Temporary Employment Permits for its international staff, which the GOZ was issuing only in monthly increments. In late September, the Immigration Office advised CRS that permits for three international staff would not be renewed. The immigration

official told CRS that it could appeal but that, if the appeal were denied, the staff in question would need to leave the country immediately. Other international NGOs have heard rumors that Temporary Employment Permits will be denied for their expatriate staff, at least until after the March elections, but have not received any official notification.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Like the recently gazetted NGO bill (refs B, C), the GOZ's attempt to hamper international organizations' humanitarian activities appears to be an effort to limit access by outsiders to rural areas in anticipation of the March 2005 elections. The GOZ wants to control outside information. It also wants to control humanitarian assistance, which dampens dependence on the GOZ and is perceived by many in the countryside as associated with the opposition. Ramped up GOZ efforts to control outside access and influence in Zimbabwe underscore the primacy of domestic political anxieties over GOZ interest in burnishing its international image. The leadership likely assesses that such measures will provoke a negative reaction from the West but not from the region, which is the principal focus of its modest charm offensive. END COMMENT.

WEISENFELD